

A TALK ON EMPTY CHAIRS

A POWERFUL ARGUMENT FROM DR. TALMAGE IN OHIO.

No Greater Influence Are in the Family Circle Than the Mute Appeals of Departed Ones—Vacant Places at the Fireside.

LAKESIDE, O., July 18.—For many years people have gathered in multitudes at this season of the year for a great outdoor assembly. The grounds are a short sail from Sandusky; the place beautiful beyond description. Dr. Talmage preached this morning in the delightful place to a vast multitude. His subject was the "Vacant Chair," and his text, I Samuel xii, 18, "Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty."

Set on the table the cutlery and the chased silverware of the palace, for King Saul will give a state dinner today. A distinguished place is kept at the table for his son-in-law, a celebrated warrior, David by name. The guests, jeweled and plumed, come in and take their places. When people are invited to a king's banquet they are very apt to go. But before the covers are lifted from the feast Saul looks around and finds a vacant seat at the table. He says within himself, perhaps audibly: "What does this mean? Where is my son-in-law? Where is David, the great warrior? I invited him. I expected him. What a vacant chair at the king's banquet! The fact was that David, the warrior, had been seated for the last time at his father-in-law's table. The day before Jonathan had coaxed David to go and occupy that place at the table, saying to David in the words of my text, "Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty."

The prediction was fulfilled. David was missed. His seat was empty. That one vacant chair spoke louder than all the occupied chairs at the banquet. In almost every house the articles of furniture take a living personality. That picture—a stranger would not see anything remarkable either in its design or execution, but it is more to you than all the pictures of the Louvre and the Luxembourg. You remember who bought it, and who admired it. And that hymn book—you remember who sang out of it. And that cradle—your mother who rocked it. And that Bible—you remember who read out of it. And that bed—you remember who slept in it. And that room—you remember who died in it. But there is nothing in all your house so eloquent and so mighty voiced as the vacant chair. I suppose that before Saul and his guests got up from this banquet there was a great glitter of wine pitchers, but all that racket was dropped quiet by the voice that came up from the vacant chair at the table.

Millions have gazed and wept at John Quincy Adams' vacant chair in the house of representatives, and at Henry Wilson's vacant chair in the vice presidency, and at Henry Clay's vacant chair in the American senate, and at Prince Albert's vacant chair in Windsor castle, and at Thiers' vacant chair in the councils of the French nation. But all these chairs are unimportant to you as compared with the vacant chairs in your own household. Have these chairs any lesson for us to learn? Are we any better men and women than when they first addressed us?

FATHER'S CHAIR. First I point out to you the father's vacant chair. Old men always like to sit in the same place and in the same chair. They somehow feel more at home, and sometimes when you are in their place and they come into the room you jump up and down and say, "Here, father, here's your chair." The probability is it is an armchair, for he is not so strong as he once was, and he needs a little upholding. His hair is a little frosty, his gums a little depressed, for in his early days there was not much dentistry. Perhaps a cane chair and old fashioned apparel, for though you may have suggested some improvement, father does not want any of your nonsense. Grandfather never had much admiration for new fangled notions.

I sat at the table of one of my parishioners in a former congregation; an aged man was at the table, and the son was presiding, and the father somewhat abruptly addressed the son and said, "My son, don't now try to show off because the minister is here!" Your father never liked any new customs or manners; he preferred the old way of doing things, and he never looked so happy as when, with his eyes closed, he sat in the armchair in the corner. From the wrinkled brow to the tip of the slippers, what placidity! The wave of the past years of his life broke at the foot of that chair. Perhaps sometimes he was a little impatient, and sometimes told the same story twice; but over that old chair how many blessed memories hover! I hope you did not crowd that old chair, and that it did not get very much in the way.

Sometimes the old man's chair gets very much in the way, especially if he has been so unwise as to make over all his property to his children, with the understanding that they are to take care of him. I have seen in such cases children crowd the old man's chair to the door, and then crowd it clear into the back of that old chair in purple and gold the letter "F." Have all the prayers of that old chair been answered? Have all the counsels of that old chair been practiced? Speak out old armchair.

History tells us of an old man whose three sons were victors in the Olympic games, and when they came back these three sons, with their garlands, put them on the father's brow, and the old man was so rejoiced at the victory of his three children that he fell dead in their arms. And are you, oh, man, going to bring a wreath of joy and Christian usefulness and put it on your father's brow, or on the vacant chair, or on the memory of the one departed? Speak out, old armchair! With reference to your father, the words of my text have been fulfilled, "Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty."

MOTHER'S CHAIR. I go a little further on to your house and I find the mother's chair. As he was very apt to be a rocking chair. She had so many cares and troubles to soothe that it must have rocked. I remember it well; it was an old chair, and the rockers were almost worn out, for I was the youngest, and the

chair had rocked the whole family. It made a creaking noise as it moved; but there was music in the sound. It was just high enough to allow of children to put their heads into her lap. That was the bank where we deposited all our hurts and worries. Ah! what a chair that was. It was different from the father's chair; it was entirely different. You ask me how? I can't tell; but we all felt it was different. Perhaps there was about this chair more gentleness, more tenderness, more grief when we had done wrong. When we were wayward father scolded, but mother cried. It was a very wakeful chair. In the sick days of children other chairs could not keep awake; that chair always kept awake—kept easily awake. The chair knew all the old lullabies and all the wordless songs which mothers sing to the sick children—songs in which all pity and compassion and sympathetic influences are combined.

That old chair has stopped rocking for a good many years. It may be set up in the loft or the garret, but it holds a queenly power yet. When at midnight you went into that grog shop to get the intoxicating draught, did you not hear a voice that said, "My son, why go in there?" And louder than the boisterous snore of the place of sinful amusement, a voice saying, "My son, what do you do here?" And when you went into the house of abandonment, a voice saying, "What would your mother do if she knew you were here?" And you were provoked with yourself, and you charged yourself with superstition and fanaticism, and your head got hot with your thoughts, and you went home and you touched the bed that a voice said, "What a prayerless pillow! Man! what is the matter?" This, you are too near your mother's rocking chair.

"Oh, pahaw!" you say. "There's nothing in that. I'm five hundred miles off from where I was born. I'm three thousand miles off from the church whose bell was the first music I ever heard." I cannot help that. You are too near your mother's rocking chair. "Oh, you say, 'there can't be anything in that. That chair has been vacant a great while.' I cannot help that. It is all the mightier for that. It is omnipotent, that vacant mother's chair. It whispers, it speaks, it weeps, it caresses, it mourns, it prays, it warns, it thunders. A young man went off and broke his mother's heart, and while he was away from home his mother died, and the telegraph brought the news, and he came into the room where she lay and looked upon her face, and he cried out: 'Oh, mother, mother, what your life could not do your death shall effect! This moment I give my heart to God.' And he kept his promise. Another victory for the vacant chair. With reference to your mother the words of my text were fulfilled, 'Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.'"

THE INVALID'S CHAIR. I go on a little further, and I come to the invalid's chair. What! How long have you been sick? "Oh! I have been sick ten, twenty, thirty years." Is it possible? What a story of endurance. There are in many of the families of my congregation these invalid's chairs. The occupants of them think they are doing no good in the world, but that invalid's chair is the mighty pulpit from which they have been preaching, all these years, trust in God. The first time I preached here at Lakeside, Ohio, amid the throngs present, there was nothing that so much impressed me as the spectacle of just one face—the face of an invalid who was wheeled in on her chair. I said to her afterward, "Madam, how long have you been prostrated?" "Oh! she was lying flat in the chair." "Oh!" she replied, "I have been this way fifteen years." I said, "Do you suffer very much?" "Oh, yes," she said, "I suffer very much; I suffer all the time; part of the time I was blind. I always suffer." "Well," I said, "can you keep your courage up?" "Oh, yes," she said, "I am happy, very happy indeed." Her face showed it. She looked the happiest of any one on the ground.

Oh, what a means of grace to the world, these invalid chairs. On that field of human suffering the grace of God gets its victory. Edward Payson, the invalid, and Richard Baxter, the invalid, and Robert Hall, the invalid, and the ten thousand of whom the world has never heard, but of whom all heaven is cognizant. The most conspicuous thing on earth for God's eye and the eye of angels to rest on, is not the throne of earthly power, but it is the invalid's chair. Oh, these men and women who are always suffering but never complaining—these victims of spinal disease, and neuralgic torture, and rheumatic excruciation will answer to the roll call of the martyrs, and rise to the martyr's throne, and will wave the martyr's palm.

But when one of these invalid's chairs becomes vacant how suggestive it is! No more bolstering up of the weary head. No more changing from side to side to get an easy position. No more use of the bandage and the cataplasm and the prescription. That invalid's chair may be folded up or taken apart or set away, but it will never lose its queenly power; it will always preach of trust in God and cheerful submission. Suffering all ended now. With respect to that invalid the words of my text have been fulfilled, "Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty."

THAT EMPTY HIGH CHAIR. I pass on and I find one more vacant chair. It is a high chair. It is the child's chair. If that chair be occupied I think it is the most potent chair in all the household. All the chairs wait on it; all the chairs are turned toward it. It means more than David's chair at Saul's banquet. At any rate it makes more racket. That is a strange house that can be dull with a child in it. How that child breaks up the hard worldliness of the place and keeps you young to sixty, seventy and eighty years of age. If you have no child of your own adopt one; it will open heaven to your soul. It will pay its way. Its crowing in the morning will give the day a cheerful starting, and its glee at night will give the day a cheerful close. You do not like children? Then you had better stay out of heaven, for there are so many there they would fairly make you crazy. Only about five hundred millions of them. The old crusty Pharisees told the mothers to keep the children away from Christ. "You bother him," they said; "you trouble the Master." Trouble him! He has filled heaven with that kind of trouble.

A pioneer in California says that for the first year or two after his residence in Sierra Nevada county there was not a single child in all the reach of a hundred miles. But the Fourth of July came, and the miners were gathered together, and they were celebrating the Fourth with band and music and a boisterous bonfire, and while the band was playing an infant's voice was heard saying, and all the miners were started, and the swagmen began to think of their homes on the eastern coast, and of their wives and children far away, and their hearts were thrilled with homesickness as they heard the baby cry. But the music went on, and the band cried louder and louder, and the brass band played louder and louder, trying to drown out the infantile interruption, when a

swarthy miner, the tears rolling down his face, got up and shook his fist and said, "Stop that noisy band, and give the baby a chance." Oh, there was pathos in it, as well as good cheer in it. There is nothing to arouse and melt and subdue the soul like a child's voice. But when it goes away from you the highest chair becomes a higher chair and there is desolation all about you. In three-fourths of the homes of this congregation there is a vacant high chair. Somehow you never get over it. There is no one to put to bed at night; no one to ask strange questions about God and heaven. Oh, what is the use of that high chair? It is to call you higher. What a drawing upward it is to have children in heaven! And then it is such a preventive against sin. If a father is going away into sin he leaves his living children with their mother; but if a father is going away into sin what is he going to do with his dead children floating about him and hovering over his every wayward step. Oh, speak out, vacant high chair, and say: "Father, come back from sin; mother, come back from worldliness. I am watching you. I am waiting for you. With respect to your child the words of my text have been fulfilled, 'Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.'"

AN INVITATION UPWARD. My hearers, I have gathered up the voices of your departed friends and tried to intone them into one invitation upward. I set in array all the vacant chairs of your homes and of your social circle, and I bid them cry out this morning: "Time is short. Eternity is near. Take my savior. Be at thoughts, and you went home and you lived together in heaven." We answer that invitation. We come. Keep a seat for us, as Saul kept a seat for David, but that seat shall not be empty. And oh! when we are all through with this world, and we have shaken hands all around for the last time, and all our chairs in the home circle and in the outside world shall be vacant, may we be worshipping God in that place from which we shall go out no more forever.

I thank God there will be no vacant chairs in heaven. There we shall meet again and talk over our earthly heart-breaks. How much you have been through since you saw them last! On the shining shore you will talk it all over. The heart-aches, the loneliness, the sleepless nights, the weeping until you had no more power to weep, because the heart was weary and dried up. Story of empty cradle and little shoe only half worn out never to be worn again, just the shape of the foot that once pressed it. And dreams when you thought the departed had come back again, and the room seemed bright with their faces, and you started up to greet them and in the effort the dream broke and you found yourself standing amid room in the midnight—alone.

Talking it all over and then, hand in hand, waking up and down in the light. No sorrow, no tears, no death. Oh, heaven! beautiful heaven! Heaven where our friends are. Heaven where we expect to be. In the east they take a cage of birds and bring it to the tomb of the dead, and then they open the door of the cage, and the birds, flying out, sing. And I would today bring a cage of Christian consolations to the grave of your loved ones, and I would open the door and let them fill all the air with the music of their voices. Oh, how they bound in these spirits before the throne! Some shout with gladness. Some break forth into uncontrollable weeping for joy. Some stand speechless in their shock of delight. They sing. They quiver with excessive gladness. They gaze on the temples, on the palaces, on the waters, on each other. They weave their joy into garlands, they spring it into tri-angles, and they stand in it, and then all the loved ones gather in a great circle around the throne of God—fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, lovers and friends, hand to hand around about the throne of God—the circle ever widening—hand to hand, joy to joy, jubilee to jubilee, victory to victory, "until the day break and the shadows flee away. Turn thou, my beloved, and be like a dove or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel."

To Keep the House Cool. Much of the heat of our houses is supplied by the kitchen range, which Bridget keeps red hot even in the dog days. Prevent this by using a gas stove or oil stove as far as possible. Then shut up tight all the rooms not in use. Not only should the windows and shutters be closed, but the blinds must be lowered to exclude every ray of light, and the doors locked to prevent the running in and out of the children, who thus admit waves of heated air. Perhaps it would be neither wise nor practicable to hermetically seal all the rooms of a house, but one room, at least, can be so treated—the parlor, and also the dining room between meals; the room selected should be closed early in the morning when the air is cool and fresh, and before the sun strikes the windows then it should not be opened until late in the afternoon.

Every house should have an accessible trap door in its roof, and when this is left open a current of heated air must rise through it and make a general draught over all the house. Awnings should be light in color, and should be at all windows and doors except those in the north. They are great helps in keeping out glare, but they should be chosen of a kind which is readily raised and lowered. After sunset, a plentiful watering of your street and pavement, and of all the garden you possess, will cool the air wonderfully.—Ladies' Home Journal.

Women and Men. Society is composed, principally, of women and ladies. They call upon each other and bore each other fearfully, yet each would feel mortally injured if the other did not call. The natural prey of man is woman, and of woman, man; but man has less leisure to pursue his natural instincts. The appreciation by which a woman is held by the male sex gives a good index, on the inverse ratio method, of the estimation in which she is held by her own. Nor, though husband and wife are one and indivisible, does it follow that the admirers of the one will be equally attached to the other? Politically speaking, England and Ireland stand to each other in a very similar relationship. Intellect in woman is appreciated by man only in so far as it qualifies her to appreciate it in him.—Murray's Magazine.

Suits Against New York. Chief Bonner said the other day that claims aggregating at least \$2,000,000 were pending against this city for alleged violations by the fire department of patent rights. "Syndicates have been formed to push these claims," said the chief, "and these are two big suits in the courts now. One is for an alleged infringement of a patent on the heater stove used on our fire engines and the other suit relates to the Nibbs relief valve. The city authorities have been legally advised that none of these claims can hold against the city."—New York Times.

OSCAR CRAIG'S IDEA.

It Will Be Crystallized at the Coming World's Fair. (Special Correspondence.)

CHICAGO, July 16.—There is going to be an international conference of charities and corrections officials in Chicago in 1893. Oscar Craig, a brainy lawyer from Rochester, president of the New York state board of charities, was the warmest advocate of such a convention at this year's meeting of those interested in charities and corrections at Indianapolis, and it was he who was foremost in suggesting in connection with it a very bright idea. He thought it would be an interesting adjunct to the World's fair to have a building set apart for charities and corrections appliances. This plan was adopted by the convention, and the Chicago representative at the conference assured the gentlemen that they would meet with a warm welcome at the hands of the fair managers.

Mr. Craig is enthusiastic over the international conference and the show of charities and corrections appliances. He has already set to work to provide for a splendid showing from New York state. Mr. Craig is known to his brother officials as a great "hunter." He has been prominent in public and charitable movements for a score of years, during which time he has become famous as one of the ablest disciples of Blackstone in America. He has been president of the New York state board of charities for two years, and he spends much time in creating plans for the constant improvement of the prison, asylum and almshouse.

"Yes, we will have space set apart for the exhibition of our charities and corrections appliances," said Mr. Craig. "We will have sections of prisons and jails of barbaric ideas, which are passing off very rapidly; also models of prisons and jails representing the modern and advanced ideas in the care of criminals. In twenty years there has been a wonderful change in the care and treatment of the criminal. We have set the pace of this reform and European countries followed public sentiment. While there is much yet to be corrected in our prisons, I can cheerfully say that the prisoner today is treated more like a human being. The criminal is taught now. Before he was tortured. Look at our Elmira reformatory.

"The commissioners of charities and correction at the big convention held at Indianapolis were all loud in their praise of this institution and looked on it in every way as a model. We want to reform, and while there are many stumbling blocks we are getting there. Our prison wardens are more humane. The men are encouraged and are no longer overworked. While there are still dark cells and certain modes of punishment to which many people object, I would say conservatively we cannot altogether dispense with punishment from prison rules. Some men you cannot reform, and these fellows are always creating a disturbance. It is necessary at times, in order to keep discipline, to provide severe punishment for the unruly.

"But the greatest reform is in the quarters provided for the criminals. While in New York state we need some new prisons, our prisons are models of cleanliness and ventilation. The men in charge of them are competent, intelligent fellows with humane natures. The thousands who visit the World's fair will be greatly interested no doubt at the great collection of torturing paraphernalia of the past. It is most astonishing, though, how quickly the people have changed their minds as to the treatment of the criminal. Sympathy is the ruling idea now with Americans. Of this we show more to our unfortunate classes than any other nation in the world. The solicitude of our people for the poor and suffering cared for in our public institutions of charity is also very great. Every foreign visitor who examines our scheme of charity is profoundly impressed by its magnitude and its comprehensiveness. They look over our prisons, asylums and poorhouses and say they are models, and New York is not the only state where this is true.

"At our exhibition," he continued, "we will not alone have models of prisons showing comparisons, but also all the known correction paraphernalia of olden and modern times. We will show the people how the insane are cared for in our own state asylums and the great advancement in the humane care of them. There will also be shown all the appliances for the education of the feeble minded, the blind, the deaf and dumb, etc. We will have pupils from institutions in the state of Illinois and other states present daily to make our exhibits more interesting. Mr. Frederick H. Wines, of Illinois, will soon go to Europe to consult with charities and corrections officials on the other side of the Atlantic and arrange for our international conference.

"Mr. William F. Runnow, of Buffalo, who had good experience at the Paris exposition, will look after the collection and arranging of models, etc. There will also be shown at the charities and corrections building practical illustrations of how charity is bestowed in our great cities. Taking New York for example, where perhaps there is more provision made for the needy than any other city in the world, we can show the system in operation by means of photographs, etc. Our system of charity is extended steadily as the demand increases. And yet our homes and asylums, refuges and protectories are overcrowded, and new fields of charity are constantly opening up."

How Edward Eggleston Looks. At one time he was in appearance quite an ideal Robert Elsmere, but of late he has grown too gray and stout and jolly. His thick hair is long, and when he brushes it straight back from his high forehead he suggests very strongly an old fashioned Hoosier dominie. He is still very vigorous, and delights in solitary tramps over the hills, and in long day cruises in his little Barnegat boat, which is well known on the lake and always saluted with extra fervor and enthusiasm by steam launches and yachts.

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